

January 2012

## A Co-Inquiry into What Matters Most in Written Reflections: A Co-Inquiry into What Matters Most in Written Reflections: Helping Students Integrate Cognition and Affect

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### Recommended Citation

Bault, Jody; Wolpow, Ray; and Werder, Carmen (2012) "A Co-Inquiry into What Matters Most in Written Reflections:  
A Co-Inquiry into What Matters Most in Written Reflections: Helping Students Integrate Cognition and Affect," *Northwest Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15760/nwjte.2012.9.2.6>

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## Abstract

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## **A Co-Inquiry into What Matters Most in Written Reflections: Helping Students Integrate Cognition and Affect**

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### **Abstract**

*Twenty-first century teacher education places increased emphasis on collaborate evaluation of student work. This study provides the voices of a graduate student in teacher education, the professor teaching a literacy methods course, and a university writing instruction support director as they endeavored to develop a rubric to help pre-service secondary teachers improve their reflective writing. Discussion and short essays, guided by that same rubric, provide conclusions on the part of the co-inquirers about the importance of considering both thoughts and feelings in assessing reflective writing and conducting co-inquiry.*

### **Introduction**

Whether we rely on Dewey's (1938) definition of reflection as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration" of any belief or supposed form of knowledge (p. 9) or on a more recent definition as thinking that "turns back – or reflects – on itself" (Geisler & Kaufman, 1989, p. 229), reflection represents both a means and an end, an essential mode and perhaps even a "signature pedagogy" (Shulman, 2005) of teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Reflection is not merely what we assign anymore; it is at the heart of what we *do*. With its accompanying goals of metacognition and self-assessment, reflective writing has become an increasingly prevalent genre at the university level in the U.S. (Yancey, 1998) as well as the U.K. (Nesi, 2010) due in large part to its connection to portfolio assessment.

Over the last decade, the stakes for the use of reflective writing as a tool for professional development among today's k-12 pre-service and in-service educators have risen dramatically with new writing requirements for licensure. At each of several development levels of certification, teachers must provide evidence of their abilities to read and interpret the written language of standards and to compose evidence-based portfolio entries that demonstrate how they are "reflective practitioners" – prepared to enable their own students in meeting "model core" standards (CCSSO, 2010; INTASC, 2011; NCATE, 2008). Such writing requires teachers to synthesize evidence of student learning with what they have read and discussed about learning theory. In so doing they must "not only describe what they did and said as teachers, but they are also asked to focus in particular upon how *their* students responded and what they learned, both individually and collectively" (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, Hammerness, & Becket, 2005; p. 83). Recent research reveals that many teachers encounter difficulties in articulating their abilities through this reflective medium. For example, in many instances, earning certification is "as much an evaluation of a teacher's writing about his or her teaching as it is an evaluation of the teaching itself" (Burroughs, 2001, p. 23). These difficulties are often rooted, among other things, in their "inability to represent tacit knowledge in complex classroom settings" (Burroughs, Schwartz, & Hendricks-Lee, 2000, p. 359).

The need to provide teacher-candidates with consistent and transparent rubrics for

assessing reflective writing came to the attention of those of us who teach literacy method courses. In a unit designed to help teacher-candidates demonstrate process writing and analytic assessment as it might be used in the middle or high school classroom, teacher-candidates composed essays illustrating their preparedness to engage in student teaching experiences (McClanahan, Baughn, & Wolpov, 2005). Our students reported that the feedback they received on the descriptive and analytic dimensions of their writing was useful; however, not so with regard to the assessment of their abilities to reflect. Indeed, written reflections were required in nearly all education courses across our department, however, there was little transparency in method or consistency of scoring, and no analytic rubric existed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the reflective component of student writing.

### **The Goal of Our Study: Make Implicit Expectations for Written Reflection Explicit**

Our university encourages faculty and students to study teaching and learning as genuine research partners, and this study was supported by a small writing research fellowship aimed at advancing this kind of collaborative research. Ray Wolpov, a secondary education professor, invited the department's graduate assistant, also a student in one of his literacy methods classes (Jody Bault), to join him in inquiry. Together, we authored a small writing fellowship grant to develop a rubric as a guide to student reflective writing, and soon convinced the director of writing support (Carmen Werder) to join us in dialogue about the process. Our subsequent writing and conversations have continued in response to the initial research question: "What happens in (a) Secondary Education undergraduate and graduate course(s) when we use a reflective writing rubric that addresses both cognitive and affective capacities/skills in order to demonstrate the proficiency necessary to meet standards for certification?"

The rubric would: a) serve as an explicit guide to help our pre-service teacher-candidates integrate their responses to their experiences in field-placed practica with ideas generated by their readings and discussions of pedagogy texts; b) explicitly call upon our teacher-candidates to reflect "wholeheartedly" and "responsibly" (Dewey, 1938, pp. 31-33) upon previously held assumptions and beliefs necessitating descriptions of personal affect in their written reflections; and finally, c) guide teacher-candidates in constructing "a personal understanding of professional practice" (Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999, p. 55) that included the feelings of their students, demonstrating the empathetic trait of "understand[ing] the diversity of thought and feeling in the world" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 166).

Familiar with the taxonomic distinction between Bloom's "cognitive domain" (1956), Krathwohl's, Bloom's, and Masia's "affective domain" (1964) and cognizant of Wiggins' and McTighe's "Six Facets of Understanding" (2005), we decided to call for an *integrated* approach; one in which writers would bring both the affective and the cognitive together. Therefore, we chose to define *integrated reflection* as a carefully reasoned examination and evaluation of experience, beliefs, and knowledge which includes both cognitive insights and emotional realizations (see Figure 1). After articulating our definition of integrated reflection, we developed a rubric with three levels of proficiency based on these four components (see Figure 2).

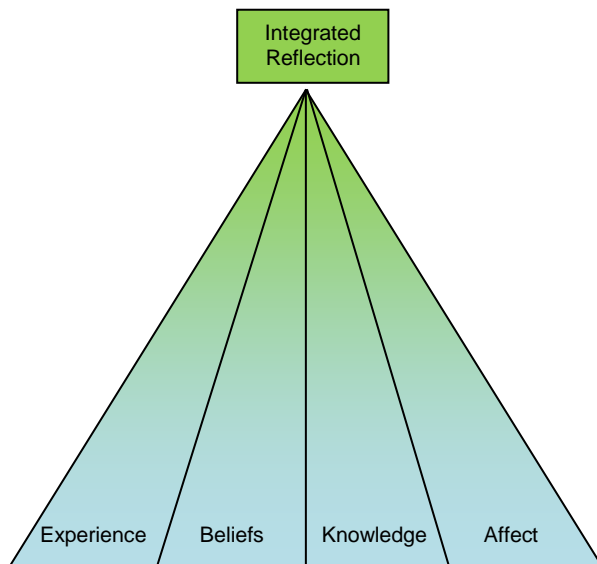


Figure 1. Integrated reflection. Integrated reflection represents the combination of experience, beliefs, knowledge, and affect.

<p><b>Reflection:</b> A carefully reasoned examination and evaluation of experience, beliefs, and knowledge which includes both cognitive insights and emotional realizations.</p>	
<p><b>Reflection uses an integrated approach which effectively combines cognitive and affective inquiry.</b></p>	
<p>___ A. Complete description of previous beliefs, roles of self and others, and other significant contexts.</p> <p>___ B. Concepts, theories, and feelings addressed are integrated and directly related to practica (field) experience.</p> <p>___ C. Experience is examined through multiple (alternative) perspectives which clearly help to shape or reinforce understanding of current and future experiences.</p> <p>___ D. New questions and perspectives are compelling and grounded in experience.</p>	<p>At or Above Standard</p>
<p><b>Reflective inquiry is attempted where cognition and affect are imbalanced or ineffectively integrated.</b></p>	
<p>___ A. Incomplete description of previous beliefs, roles of self and others, and other significant contexts.</p> <p>___ B. Concepts, theories, and feelings addressed are not adequately integrated or related to practica (field) experience.</p> <p>___ C. Experience may be examined through more than one perspective; however, applicability to current and future experiences is incomplete.</p> <p>___ D. Some new questions and perspectives are addressed.</p>	<p>Approaching Standard</p>
<p><b>Reflection relies solely on cognition or affect; an integrated approach is not evident.</b></p>	
<p>___ A. Little to no description of previous beliefs, roles of self and others, or other significant contexts.</p> <p>___ B. Concepts, theories, and feelings are not addressed, not clearly integrated, and/or do not clearly relate to practice (field) experience.</p> <p>___ C. Experience is only examined through one perspective and is missing application to current and future experiences.</p> <p>___ D. Reflection does not explicitly lead to new perspectives or further questions.</p>	<p>Below Standard</p>

Figure 2. Integrated reflection rubric. This rubric serves as a tool to assess each teacher candidate’s successful integration of experience, beliefs, knowledge, and affect.

## Method

Participants in this study included 46 pre-service teacher-candidates in four sections of literacy method courses. The four reading responses which we termed QR2's required teacher-candidates to **Q**uote from their textbooks or journals, **R**espond explaining why the quote is salient, generate some "contagious" **Q**uestions inspired by the quote (a contagious question generates discussion and more questions), and then **R**eflect in such a manner as to integrate practicum experience, beliefs, knowledge and affect. The culminating Integrated Reflection required candidates to draw on their learning from previous QR2's as well as from the rest of the course. We informed teacher-candidates in the literacy methods courses that the same rubric would guide our scoring of all these assignments. We also familiarized teacher-candidates with the rubric through in-class verbal explanation, provided sample reflective essays, and using the rubric, gave them the opportunity during classes to provide each other with feedback. Graduate assistants were available to provide tutorial assistance and also conducted interviews with students in order to discern the underlying reasons/causes of strengths and difficulties.

## Findings

In the early stages of this study, we observed that writing about feelings was often a challenge to those teacher-candidates with extensive training in the "hard" and social sciences. For example, when prompted to include the first person pronoun as part of a reflection, one teacher-candidate responded, "Are you sure? You know we are discouraged from doing that in our other course. We have been trained to write 'objectively.'" What is more, for some, authoring statements of feeling had had no place in their studies to that point. Some teacher-candidates struggled to express their caring, finding the communication of this kind of affect an unexpected challenge. Take, for example, the following excerpt from a reflective entry written by a pre-service graduate student (a future physics/math teacher) who had been told by one of his students that he "didn't seem to care":

I guess I have always struggled showing emotion and having my body language reflect my feelings. . . My first thought was that I am going to have a hard time with this aspect of the job. I am not great at showing emotion and I think that I may struggle doing this. . . I worry that my demeanor might make me come off as cold in a way.

In their reflective writing, others struggled to use affective language and instead used language almost entirely from the cognitive domain. Often, when these writers did attempt to use affective language, it was inaccurate. For example, the common frame "I feel that . . ." usually failed to describe an affective experience and would have more accurately been framed by the cognitive phrase "I think that . . ." Lacking the necessary vocabulary seemed partially to blame – affective language is not often part of our academic lexicon, thus some had trouble getting more descriptive than "blanket" feeling words (such as "sad" or "upset").

We were able to alleviate this issue in part by providing affective vocabulary lists, which assisted our students when writing in the affective dimension. In the following excerpt, Alicia (pseudonym) struggles to use affective language appropriately and to make the connection between cognition and affect. In response to a quote from the class text, "Every teacher should be, to a certain extent, a teacher of reading and attempting to integrate it with her/his experiences

in the field” (Wolpaw & Tonjes, 2006, p. 84), Alicia writes:

Communication knows no boundaries and that is why I wholeheartedly agree with the statement that all subject areas contribute to reading comprehension and this matter should be more directly implemented and assessed within every school. However, as much as this goal is worthy of great attention, I worry that it cannot or will not be integrated into every school. In essence, among other reasons, this would mean more teacher preparation courses for teacher-candidates to feel up to the job of teaching literacy content in their field. It would also mean that all the teachers not currently capable of contributing to their students’ reading comprehension would somehow be required to find the time and effort to do this.

When compared with the reflective standards set forth by the rubric, Alicia effectively examines this issue from more than one perspective. However, she uses affective language when not actually referring to feelings (“I worry that . . .”). The reader of this reflection can gather a great deal of what the teacher-candidate *thinks* about the cross-curricular responsibility of reading comprehension, but the reader is left wondering what she *feels* about the subject. Note the significant change in this excerpt in one of Alicia’s later QR2s:

As a future educator, I am concerned that I will not be able to address every student’s needs in a way that fosters a positive community of engagement and learning in my classroom. More importantly, I question my role as an educator in “solving” or attempting to solve all the background problems my students will have and bring into my classroom. . . . [A]m I an educator or counselor? When is it enough that my students come to class and when is it enough when they learn something, anything? . . . But how do my ideals of respect, reason, and relationships differ from my students’? What I hope for as a teacher, is that building respectful, flourishing communities within my classroom will improve learning and engagement in my content area. However, with all honesty, I believe that I personally cannot help every student and that should be ok.

In this entry we found a more complete description of Alicia’s beliefs as well as a discussion of her “roles of self and others” within the specific context. She is able to lay bare, in writing, an affective connection with the students, embedded with cognitive insights from class readings and discussions.

Improvements in integrated reflective writing, as quantified by higher rubric tallies, continued throughout the quarter as we looked for ways to help teacher-candidates express both their emotional and cognitive realizations. Acting under the assumption that teacher-candidates would be more willing to articulate their feelings to a peer rather than to the instructor who assigned their grades, Jody Bault conducted face-to-face interviews. Teacher-candidates explained how they anticipated that written reflections might enhance their learning experiences both inside the teacher preparation courses and out in the teaching field. Note the following response from a future math teacher as he attempted to articulate his challenge in writing reflectively in the integrated way we expected:

I’m not the type to write my feelings or my thoughts about things, and so I’m struggling

to learn how to journal. When I teach, this will be especially helpful. Knowing the difference between the cognitive and the affective domain and what it means to write in both helps me [to be real with my students].

Using information garnered through these interviews, we were able to improve the rubric and devise strategies to improve instruction for our fifth/culminating writing assignment: the Final Reflection. Here we asked teacher-candidates to delve more deeply into a particular literacy-related challenge in the field. Our prompt and checklist required that they describe the aspects of a literacy assignment carefully, closely examining the role that their own perspectives, beliefs, and expectations played in the interactions, and provide student evidence of learning. We assessed these final essays using a combination of this checklist and our improved rubric.

When reading first drafts of Final Reflections, we often had to push our writers to go further. For example, Samantha's (pseudonym) initial draft, reflecting upon her experience as a Caucasian female working at a Native American school, stopped short of an affective response by simply stating that she felt "like an outsider" and a little "anxious." Samantha was aware that this somewhat negative emotional state may have unintended consequences when working with these children, and her inability to reach a comfortable state of mind even after several weeks was a constant source of frustration. When prompted to explore her anxiety, Samantha's final draft probed at the heart of the undesirable emotional response, allowing her to articulate a sense of peace within that educational context:

But as an "outsider", this young woman feels out of place and anxious in being at the school, an unwelcome "guest" uncontrollably emitting an air of superiority. My physical presence on the reservation, red hair and pale, pale skin, somehow confirms historical notions of white dominance over Native Americans. . . . [I feel] the need to move a little faster than normal and hide the cultural differences I've unwittingly brought with me. For there is a vast discrepancy between my life and theirs, right? At least that's what the small, indiscernible voice tells me every time I arrive . . . So I may always feel like an outsider as I weave my way out along the bay to what seems like another world, but I am an outsider only with the best intentions for providing and receiving opportunities to learn and, for now, that is enough for me.

Overall, as indicated by an improvement of more than 25% in rubric scores on later writing assignments the vast majority of our teacher-candidates who initially struggled to write integrated reflections were able to improve the quality of their integrated reflective writing by the end of the quarter. More importantly, the content and quality of their culminating essays provided substantive evidence of reflective practice, while demonstrating the learning of their k-12 students.

### **Discussion: Why the Struggle to Articulate and Integrate Affect?**

As we repeatedly read entries articulating the struggles of teacher-candidates to integrate affect and cognition into their reflections, we three co-inquirers engaged in discussion around two key questions: Why is it that many educators (including our colleagues) choose to focus primarily on the cognitive subject matter of curriculum and methodological dimensions of instruction to the exclusion of the affective dimension of teaching and learning? And, why don't



high-stakes tests measure affective dimensions of learning and teaching? We summarize three of our assertions, limited as they are, with the hope they might provoke further discussion among those who teach reflective writing to meet certification requirements.

Perhaps teachers and those who write the high-stakes tests neglect affective dimensions because this approach mirrors how they were trained. Psychologists Yanchar and Hill (2003) point to the absence of ontology in the dominant models of psychology that have framed, either implicitly or explicitly, most educational research into learning and teaching. They assert that neglect of subjective understandings of “existence” and “beingness” results in researching for “objective” methodological solutions to problems, rather than an ontological explication which includes “psychological phenomena such as intentionality, agency, morality, [and] spirituality” (p. 12). Whether or not this downplaying of the affective is an unintended result of education and training, teachers are not the only professionals challenged to come to terms with the bifurcation of thought and feeling. Physicians are sometimes guilty of clinically treating symptoms, not treating the whole person (Siegel, 1988). Attorneys sometimes seek remedies that are exclusively punitive or monetary in nature, neglecting remedies that address the spiritual and moral needs of those victimized (Rosenbaum, 2004). A quote, often attributed to Albert Einstein warns, “Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.” Indeed, affective considerations of losses and gains are difficult to measure and thus, inter-rater reliability is hard to obtain. Bottom line: the things that matter most to our students may not be aligned with what is “measured most” on tests of adequate yearly progress.

Perhaps some educators treat writing with affect like a Pandora’s Box, not to be opened because unforeseen troubles will emerge. With large numbers of students in today’s classrooms, there is no time to wrestle openly with emotions. It’s one thing for a teacher to check for completion of assignments, for accuracy of answers, or for correct use of conventions. It’s entirely another matter to expect an instructor to have the time and emotional investment to read for emotional realizations and to respond with empathy. Truly, empathetic response to another’s experiences (e.g., frustration, anger) can result in considerable personal upset to the teacher. Given the number of students who are needy, the lack of resources to meet those needs, and the fact that standardized tests don’t measure whether or not students value what they are learning – this additional instructional expectation seems too much. However, most experienced teachers would agree that successful teaching requires high levels of empathy, especially with underachievers. In the words of folk singer Tom Rush (2009), “I’ve learned that the heart has reasons that reason cannot know.” Empathy enables teachers to know students more deeply and thus understand a full scope of their learning needs.

Perhaps an answer to our questions may be found with those who argue time directed to the affective will create deficits in curricular rigor. We realize that the body of knowledge continuously expands on this issue, and we are not suggesting that subject-matter rigor is unimportant. However, the focus on content without affective relevance can leave k-12 teachers in the unenviable position of having to motivate their students to develop knowledge and skills (cognition) that they don’t value (affect).

So how should K-12 teacher-candidates motivate today’s students to make these valuable connections? An aphorism heard frequently among teachers in the public schools is that students won’t care about what you are teaching them until they know that you care about them. We can show students we care about what matters to them by paying particular attention to what students are thinking *and* feeling, and then allowing this knowledge to shape our instructional

methodology (Durlak, Dymicki, Taylor, Weissbert, & Schellinger, 2011). By deliberately inviting students to study their own learning, we can explore a territory where educators cannot venture alone: the discovery of what happens in our heads and our hearts when we interact in our classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

In an effort to emulate what our teacher-candidate writers learned, we co-authors will now explain – in three Final Reflections – the conclusions we each draw from our co-inquiry. Like the students we taught, we draw on the rubric developed during the study to guide our writing. We will leave it to our readers to see if our reflections demonstrate an ability to integrate content from the field with the texts and our discussions, and to bring together the mind and heart.

### **Authors' Reflections: Three Perspectives**

#### **Jody Bault, Secondary Education Graduate Student**

I am a crier. Commercials, sentimental music, and sometimes even a beautiful scene can make my eyes well up with tears. While I can now admit this inclination with a smile, I have not always done so. I do not tell people, for instance, that I used to frequent my middle school's restrooms and nurse's office to cry in relative peace, or that my elementary school teachers regularly called home to make sure everything was okay. Let's just say that it does not help your social life to be a crier – at one time, my greatest wish was to be able to control my emotions.

Finding my friendships in a constant state of chaos, I plunged myself into my schoolwork, an area where I had always found success. I found stability while hard at work on a sheet of math problems or deep into a book, reading about other people's problems. I learned to adhere to a certain "Code" with which I was able to keep a high GPA: (a) Find out what the teacher wants, and (b) Perform to that level. Using this Code, I developed strong scholastic skills, such as memorizing a long list of facts in a short amount of time. I was thrilled when one teacher showed me the formula for writing academic papers; as long as I avoided creative writing classes, I never again had to leave this intellectual comfort zone.

They say that when things seem too good to be true, they probably are. Near the end of my junior year in college, I became increasingly dissatisfied with myself as a learner. I lacked intrinsic motivation, I procrastinated until the very last minute, and I never worked harder than I had to. As a result, I remember few of my papers that I've written and even fewer of those facts I could once rattle off with ease. After working with my co-authors, I now realize why my learning was never meaningful to me. I was always operating for someone else and sliding under their effort radar, certainly never reflecting upon my experiences to examine how *I* fit in. Furthermore, I was operating exclusively in the cognitive domain while at school, having learned firsthand the disastrous potential of emotional investment if I lost control.

Since becoming aware of the lack of affect in our current academic culture, I have noted further illustrations everywhere. I have heard professors attempt to speak of affective concerns using cognitive terminology. I have heard the tongues of educated people, witty words at their forefront, become paralyzed in fear when someone in the room is crying. When the conversation shifts back to a safe, cognitive space, these same tongues loosen with sweet relief. Why does our

culture encourage people to fear their raw undersides? As a future educator, I need to ask myself whether I consider it wise to continue to expect future generations to suppress that which they can't explain in an even voice and with empirical evidence. Further, how can I hope to facilitate an expression of affect in my future students if I am not myself regularly engaging in reflective writing, the medium with which I can dredge up those feelings – even the hurtful feelings – that would otherwise lie dormant within my own consciousness?

Integrated reflection is the cornerstone which empowers both teacher and learner student to take control of their learning, and thereby find meaning and passion. In our current climate of standardized testing and college-bound programs, cognition-heavy teaching is here to stay; students will eventually absorb the intended message: personal perspectives and feelings do not belong in the field of academia. Meanwhile, today's schools are rampant with apathy. If educators want students to *value* their education, we must consciously work toward a new, reflection-based practice with a truly integrated approach. In these discussions, we authors keep coming back to the same core idea: What matters most to teachers should stem from what matters most to our students, even if it means embracing the criers within ourselves.

### **Ray Wolpow, Secondary Education Professor**

My doctoral research was a study of three award winning teachers, survivors of pervasive and prolonged trauma, (one was a survivor of Auschwitz, the second a child-survivor of an accident that left him physically deformed, the third affected by sexual abuse) – all seeking to learn how they helped their own students, especially those struggling with modern day trauma in their own right, to persevere in school. Putting their unspeakable stories into words and onto paper challenged me to practice what Ruth Linden (1993) called the “first ethical principle” of this kind of research, “I must be prepared to be at least as vulnerable and honest as I ask them to be. I must be willing to stand beside them, not to speak for them, but to speak for myself and with them” (p. ix).

By way of support, my advisor recommended that I keep a “reflective journal” of my thoughts and feelings as part of my field notes. In this writing, I discovered that finding words for the understandings of my informants was often an impossible task. After all, they were describing events and feelings well beyond anything I had ever experienced. Nonetheless, finding words to represent what it was like to empathetically stand beside my informants was within my grasp so long as I integrated experience with theory, and affect with cognition.

This discovery transformed my understanding of teaching and learning. I borrow the attributes of monocular and binocular vision to illustrate the essence of this understanding. In the case of monocular vision, the observer who views a moving object with only one eye is provided a very clear image. This image, however, lacks depth and can thus lead to errors in perception. With binocular vision, the observer viewing a moving object with both eyes acquires depth, but also acquires substantial distortion. Boundary problems, manifested by the blurring caused by the overlapping of two distinctly different singular visions, requires the brain to locate images in the contexts of time, place, thought and belief. By analogy, to view an experience or theory solely through one lens, whether that lens is cognition or affect, may lead to a “clear picture” that lacks depth and may be in error.

The final written reflections of the teacher-candidates in this study demonstrated the affective language of empathy, well integrated with the cognitive language of theoretical understanding. The confusion manifest by boundary problems led them to further reflective

inquiry. As a result their entries revealed their recognition of and responsiveness to the needs of their students as well as to their own needs. Certainly this kind of writing will strengthen their abilities to meet standards for certification as well as their ability to meet the needs of their students. However, I am left wondering how effective this methodology will be over time. With multiple, often unreasonable, demands on their time, how can they sustain this practice? How can I? The questions alone leave me feeling fearful and overwhelmed.

As instructor of this course, I had a very clear monocular picture that lacked depth of my teaching and how it affected student learning. It was a picture not without misconception on my part. As I partnered with my co-authors, it became clear that we had overlapping and distinctly different perceptions of meaning. In the negotiation of our interpretations lay the potential for improved learning and teaching. Co-inquiry provided opportunities for us to embrace the thoughts and feelings of others in ways that changed each of us irrevocably. How will I sustain this practice of integrated reflective co-inquiry?

Reflective writing and co-inquiry can and should be a forum for those who recognize that we teach in difficult and divisive times, in which children, parents, teachers, researchers, families, and communities are left with monocular images, thoughts, and feelings that are fragmented and disconnected. For these reasons and more, reflective writing can and should emphasize heart and mind, process and content, difference and wholeness. If not now, when?

### **Carmen Werder, Writing Instruction Support and Writing Research Fellows Director**

While my interest in reflection initially stemmed from my work in rhetoric and composition, as a Carnegie Scholar (2005-06) I had the opportunity to conduct research in my own communication classroom while in the company of teacher scholars from across disciplines as part of a Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) initiative. That experience showed me the value of co-inquiry on learning across disciplinary boundaries. I also had the pleasure of working with another CASTL initiative, Student Voices, on partnering with students in studying teaching and learning (Werder & Otis, 2010). These experiences prompted me to develop the Writing Research Fellowship program and opened the door to work with faculty and student scholars of teaching and learning like my co-authors. Working with them on this study has deepened my understanding of how co-inquiry with faculty and students across disciplines can significantly advance research on writing in the disciplines, especially on assessment.

But this co-inquiry has taught me even more. Professionally, it has startled me into realizing that I have been neglecting a crucial aspect in evaluating my students' reflective writing: the affective dimension. While I've used a "sentipensante pedagogy" directed at wholeness (Rendon, 2009), I have not really *counted* the emotional dimension in evaluating the student reflective writing that I've assigned for so many years. And while I may not use the rubric that my co-authors have developed for their teacher-candidates, I have already begun to integrate the affective component explicitly in the prompts and evaluation schemes I'm using with my own students.

The experience has caused me to reflect on why I – as a composition teacher and writing program administrator – might have resisted equal attention to the affective dimension in evaluating reflective writing. Perhaps in an ongoing effort to show that we are a serious discipline in our own right with serious intellectual interests and aspirations, we compositionists have privileged the cognitive. Perhaps that skewing helps explain why we were so receptive to

the influence of cognitive psychology at one time (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Furthermore, this slighting might result from a gendered issue in that so many composition teachers are women who may tend to veer to the cognitive dimension in an ongoing effort to show evidence of our intellectual capacity. These considerations have helped me understand why I may have neglected counting the affective responses in assessing students' reflective writing and have also enabled me to see how I can integrate both the cognitive and the affective.

But how has this research experience made me feel? Initially, I felt disappointed and even remiss to realize that despite my long-time experience in teaching writing, I'd slighted a component of writing assessment that my secondary education colleagues understood so well. But, now, I feel only blessed.

Personally, I feel affirmed in acknowledging how much I truly care about my colleagues and my students. Matters of the heart are very important to me, and I work to listen to others and respond to their intellectual and emotional needs with care and empathy. As a young child I learned to push down my feelings because if I didn't, the fear and anguish I felt when my father was having a violent episode would have been overwhelming. I learned to favor my brain and my ability to think through and over the sadness and fear. I learned my lessons so well that even though I can elicit those feelings easily for others, I have guarded my own. During the course of this study, I have learned to let down my guard and look forward to leaving it down.

This co-inquiry has helped me take to heart (as well as to head) what Parker Palmer and Arthur Zojonc (2010) mean when they say that "collegial conversations" can transform the academy and that they are at the "heart of higher education" and all education for that matter. Working with my co-authors has reminded me that my feelings matter, too, and I've learned to articulate them better. And most importantly, this work has reminded me that I need to *count* them for student writers for whom they likely matter the *most*.

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